

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for rationing ink in a printer, the printer having an ink supply for printing content on print media, the method comprising the steps of:  
receiving a print job comprising print content;  
parsing the print content prior to printing;  
if the print content is assigned a priority level, printing the print content in a print mode that is appropriate for the priority level; and  
if the print content is not assigned a priority level, printing the print content using a normal print mode.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the print content is comprised of a plurality of at least one section and each section is assigned a priority level.

3. The method of claim 2 and further comprising printing each section of the print content in according to the priority level assigned to that particular section.

4. The method of claim 2 and further comprising the steps of:  
printing a first section of print content that comprises a low priority level by printing the first section in grayscale; and  
printing a second section of print content that comprises a high level of priority by printing the second section in the normal print mode.

5. The method of claim 1 and further comprising the step of coupling the printer to a computer.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the step of parsing is performed by the computer.

7. A printer having a capability to ration its ink supply in response to the ink supply level, the printer comprising:

a printing device that prints a received print job on print media; and

a controller, coupled to the printing device, that controls the printing device in response to the print job, the controller having means for instructing the printing device to print in an ink-rationing mode in response to the ink supply level.

8. The printer of claim 7 wherein the print job comprises content having at least one section, each of the at least one section comprising a priority level.

9. The printer of claim 8 wherein the controller further comprises means for instructing the printing device to print in the ink rationing mode in response to both the ink supply level and each priority level

10. The printer of claim 7 wherein the ink supply comprises a laser printer toner supply.

11. The printer of claim 7 wherein the printing device comprises a thermal inkjet pen.

12. The printer of claim 7 wherein the printing device comprises a piezoelectric inkjet pen.

13. A printer having a capability to ration its ink supply in response to the ink supply level, the printer comprising:

a printing device that prints a received print job on print media, the print job having sections of content each section comprising a priority level; and

a controller, coupled to the printing device, that controls the printing device in response to the print job, the controller comprising means for instructing the printing

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device to print a first section of content in an ink-rationing mode in response to at least one of the ink supply level and the first section priority level.

14. A method for generating a print document that can be printed in an ink rationing printer, the method comprising the steps of:

generating content that is comprised of at least one section;

assigning a print priority level to each section of the at least one section of the content; and

generating the print document comprising the content and the at least one priority level.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the at least one print priority level is a minimum print priority level.

16. The method of claim 15 and further including the steps of:

transmitting the print document to a printer having an ink rationing mode, the ink rationing mode printing the content in response to a printer ink supply level and the at least one priority level; and

generating a charge of a predetermined monetary value if the print document is printed at a priority level that is less than the minimum print priority level.

17. In a printer comprising an ink supply for printing content on print media, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a print job comprising print content;

parsing the print content prior to printing;

if the print content is assigned a priority level, printing the print content in a print mode that is appropriate for the priority level; and

if the print content is not assigned a priority level, printing the print content using a normal print mode.

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18. The printer of claim 17 wherein the ink supply comprises a laser printer toner supply.

19. A printer having a capability to ration its ink supply, the printer comprising:

a printing device that prints a received print job on print media, the print job having sections of content each section comprising a print priority level; and

a controller, coupled to the printing device, that controls the printing device in response to the print job, the controller comprising:

means for parsing the print content to determine each print priority level of each section of content; and

means for instructing the printing device to print a first section of content in an ink-rationing mode in response to at least one of the ink supply level and the first section priority level.

20. The printer of claim 19 wherein the ink rationing mode comprises printing in a grayscale mode.

21. In a system comprising a computer coupled to a printer, the printer having an ink supply for printing content on print media, the method comprising the steps of:

the computer receiving a print job comprising print content, the content having at least one section;

the computer parsing the print content to determine at least one print priority level for each section of the at least one section;

the computer generating a print job in response to the content and the at least one print priority level;

transmitting the print job to the printer; and

printing the print job in response to the content and the at least one print priority level.

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22. The system of claim 21 wherein the step of printing comprises printing the content in an ink rationing mode in response to the at least one print priority level.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the ink rationing mode comprises printing the content in grayscale.

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